

U.S. Offers Fighter Planes to Peru

By Dan Kurzman
Washington Post Staff Writer

The United States has offered to provide Peru's Air Force with 20 F-86 fighter planes.

The Peruvians would prefer to purchase modern F-5 supersonic aircraft, but have been told that only the older planes are for sale.

As a result, reliable sources said, Peru may purchase about 15 F-86s and five British Hawker Hunter supersonic aircraft. British manufacturers are understood to have offered to sell the latter planes.

Such a combination purchase, it is estimated, would amount to about \$7 million or \$8 million. The cost would be halved if Peru bought only F-86s, but Peruvian military leaders feel that some more modern planes must be obtained for training purposes. On the other hand, Peruvian officials are reluctant to put out some \$20 million for a full complement of the newer planes.

Peru's effort to expand its air force follows the purchase by neighboring Chile of 21 Hawker Hunters for \$20 million. The United States had offered Chile F-86s but the offer was rejected.

The chain effect of war-plane purchases by competing and sometimes mutually hostile South American countries apparently was set off by the U.S. sale of 25 A-4B jets to Argentina over a year ago. The original contract called for the sale of 50 planes, but this figure was cut in half because of the demands of the Vietnam war.

A State Department spokes-

man would say only that Peru was rumored to be interested in the purchase of planes, but confirmed the Argentine purchase.

He emphasized that President Johnson has said it is

unfortunate that underdeveloped countries should purchase arms when funds are needed for economic development. But, the spokesman added, it was difficult to generalize.